

# BLOOD AND BLACK LACE



*Issue One*  
*Spring 89*  
**£1**

This Issue:  
**ARGENTO:**  
The song of  
Death.

**BAVA'S**  
Planet of  
the Vampires

**REVIEWS:**  
11 DAYS  
11 NIGHTS  
PARTS 1 & 2.  
VAMPIRE  
IN VENICE.  
GRAVEYARD  
.....YAWN!!  
MACABRE.

**B.B.F.C.:**  
SCISSOR  
HAPPY?

*LAMBERTO BAVA: Filmography*



# HEADITORIAL

*Andrew Featherstone*

Until now there has not been a publication that solely deals with the Italian genre and *Blood and Black Lace* I hope will fill that much needed gap in the market. It has been drafted by people who love and understand the Italian way of film making and I hope that you find *Blood and Black Lace* an informative and satisfying read. It gives me no pleasure in telling you that *MARIO MONTEY*'s masterpiece "*OPERA*" sadly is another victim of the distributor (*DEBRO*) treating its artistic cinematic output merely as a commercially lamegap product and have drastically cut "*OPERA*", even giving its American release a freeze frame ending at the point when *IAN DRAKE* says "he's afraid, yes, yes".

It's unlikely that "*OPERA*" will appear in this country and is the state it is in at the moment, for that I am glad.

There is some good news to all of this; that is *MICHELLE SORVI*'S "*THE CHURCH*" (*CHURCH* 3) is every bit as good as you would have expected from him; incidentally, *SORVI*'S "*THE CHURCH*" will be the pivotal subject of issue two, also looking back at not only the pre-famous *Bacon* films but also the career of *MICHELLE SORVI* - see you then!

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Many, many thanks too

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# ARGENT

## THE SONG OF DEATH

By Mark Hockley

Through the power of the visual image, Sergio Argento has become a legend, but without his extraordinary use of music these images would never really have become alive. Of all the elements involved in the composition of Argento's films, music is undoubtedly the most important and dynamic.

The collaboration of Sergio Argento and Ennio Morricone would seem almost inevitable considering their backgrounds; Argento's earlier work on Sergio Leone's "Once upon a time in the West" enabling him to experience Morricone's music at first hand. However, at the beginning of his career, somewhat understandably, he had not yet truly found his devastating cinematic style or progressive command of the music. This was to come later and so the meeting of these two considerable talents failed to produce the great things which might have been hoped for. "The Bird with the Crystal Flame" in 1970, with its jazz orientated score (a style which Morricone carried through all three of his Argento directed works) both visually and musically, never amounted to very much, remaining far too plain and expressionless. With "Cat 'o' Nine Tails" (1971) the cycle continues, although more successfully, but here still we find Morricone unwilling or unable to create any truly memorable themes, preferring to use rhythmic bass and drum lines, that work well enough in a disjointed way but finally fail to produce any real sense of satisfaction. It could always be said, of course, that the uneasy and fragmented feel of the score was entirely intentional and a part of Argento's vision for the

film but, in comparison with his later works, this technique leaves much to be desired. The composer's final contribution for Argento to date, "Four Flies on Gray Velvet" (1972) takes his jazz inspired scoring to its inevitable conclusion, with the music leading character a sender of such a bend. Certainly, overall, much of the music for all three films is similar in tone and texture, although here at least Morricone does inject one of his more stylised ideas, heard to the best effect at the film's climax and possibly heralding the beginnings of Argento's new understanding of film composition, both musically and visually. It is a pity that as a composer Ennio Morricone did not contribute more seriously to the films of Sergio Argento as he is certainly quite capable of brilliant things, but as a musical training ground for Argento himself, he could not have worked with a more exciting or progressive composer, so that it would be fair to suppose that over the course of three works together, Morricone's influence on his concepts and visions of film scoring would have been considerable.

Briefly moving away from his career in the Italian giallo genre, Argento next made the comedy "Five Days of Milan" (1973) with a score by Muzio D'Arlevi. It was during this period that a major breakthrough was made for both Argento himself and, in many ways, the entire horror genre.

### The Discovery of Gabillo

The Italian group of young musicians were to be Argento's musical and inspirational choice as composer of his next film, "Profondo Rosso" (Deep Red) (1975) with additional music by Giorgio Gaslini and with the advent of their unique musical style of powerful gothic rock and sinister melodies, they changed the face of Argento's movies.

Although the band are not given full reign during "Deep Red", only providing a few different musical cues which are used several times, the arrival of their music is quite electric and in terms of progression this cannot be over-stated as a major turning point. The main theme "Profondo Rosso" is simply brilliant and is Gabillo at their best and although the film itself still contains many faults, the signs are clearly evident that Argento is moving forward. But it was with his next production both directionally and musically that he truly showed what he was capable of.

"Suspiria" (1976) was a departure for Sergio Argento in several ways. Thematically, the introduction of the supernatural was a tremendous boost to his script and enabled him to do some new and exciting things, but it was with the music that the greatest progress was made. Gabillo's score for "Suspiria" competed in collaboration with Argento himself (although now this arrangement actually worked is difficult to assess, with composer credit for all tracks on the soundtrack album having been given to Gabillo) was, and is, unique. Sadly, the very facet which made it so outstanding and powerful, its sheer volume giving it a relentless and oppressive feel has, since its re-issue on video after doctoring, been lessened somewhat and greatly weakens the impact of the movie.

Musically, the score incorporates all Gabillo's usual instrumentation, but also includes some eerie vocal effects which combine to produce a genuinely unsettling feeling. The main theme used during the film, aptly entitled "Suspiria" is a haunting melodic line which builds upon itself creating an atmosphere of brooding menace. The opening sequence, where Jessica Harper arrives at an airport and waits out through some automatic sliding doors as the film begins, is a magical moment and immediately commands the audience's attention. The thunderous quality of the score as a whole is its main strength and for this reason alone it is strongly suggested that any potential

viewer break down on original copy. With striking and ominous tracks, including "Night" and "Black Forest", the power of Gabillo's music here in its context for film is quite extraordinary. Most importantly, it was here that Argento finally found the true significance of film music at its ultimate best and learnt a very valuable lesson. It is interesting that much of the music was composed before the film was actually shot and Argento went as far as to have it played over loud-speakers during filming, enabling cast and crew to react to its atmospheric influence. This is an intriguing idea and one which could (and did in this case!) bring about some interesting and effective results. In Argento's career so far, this film was a milestone and, musically, it was as important as any other single film ever made, in that it broke new ground and has encouraged others to try new and progressive ideas, although admittedly and unfortunately, not as often as might have been hoped.

Argento's next project was as unexpected as it was welcome. His collaboration with American director, George A. Romero, on "Zombias", "Dawn of the Dead" (1978) was a great cinematic event, especially for true fans of the Horror/Fantasy genre and the fact that Argento produced the film also enabled it to have its score written by none other than Gabillo. Unfortunately, in the American release the music is toned down a good deal, losing once again a great amount of its power. However, Argento with his understanding of film music, which had developed through the course of his own films, made sure that there was a rather more effective who in the version released in Italy. Sadly, alas, it could be argued that this is the best film he ever worked on but, in many ways, there lies the main fault in all of



his own productions. Argento is undoubtedly a great director whose own pre-occupation with sharp instruments of death is often his downfall (why? Ed.) Nevertheless, his films at their best contain a mysterious quality which is compelling in a way few others have ever been capable of. In many ways, "Inferno" (1980) is the most accessible of all the scores composed for Argento's films, as a complete work, with its strong blend of both orchestral and synthesized pieces. It was something of a surprise when he chose Keith Emerson to compose the music for "Inferno", especially considering how brilliant Goblin's music had been for "Suspiria" but obviously he wanted a different sound for this film. In fact, Emerson was not his first choice, as he very much wanted lingering Brian to work on the score but when they were found to be unavailable, due to touring, Emerson, who Argento had seen "live" in concert, and had been much impressed by, (particularly when he drove drives between the keys of his synthesizers to produce extraordinary sound effects!), was the perfect replacement, and as has become usual, it proved to be an inspired decision.

the film and credits instead of the original track written, "Cigarettes, Sex, ecc!" It can only be supposed that Argento liked it so much that he chose to reprise it! The entire score is one so he relished and with the film's conclusion Emerson rounds the whole thing off with the grand and inspiring "Inferno Finale" which, in conjunction with the director's images on screen, reaches a pinnacle of brilliance in the very final scene where



Death literally brings the house down, leaving the viewer both impressed and a little awed!

This certainly is one of the great Argento film scores for what may be his finest film, and it can only be hoped that Keith Emerson makes a welcome return very soon.

When "Tenebrae" (1982) was announced, many hoped and expected the film to be the third part of the three mother & trilogy, but this was to be quite untrue. Also, the score was to be composed by three individuals answering to the names (Geronzi), Pignatelli and Morante. For those familiar with Goblin, they are quite aware that these three men were members of the group, who it appeared had split up. However, once more, Argento's choice of composers was to be inspirational and even following Keith Emerson's brilliant work on "Inferno", the ex-Goblin's soundtrack for "Tenebrae" was a masterpiece. Combining their usual guitar, synth, bass and drum sound, we are treated to a superb, catchy main title which must rank as one of the classic film themes to ever have been written. It is a pity that the film itself left much to be desired in script content, Argento returning to his familiar giallo territory (one which unfortunately he seems determined to continue with). Even so, the score is certainly among his most inspired



The musical score for "Inferno" is simply stunning, rich and brooding with an electrifying sense of atmosphere which complements Argento's visuals wonderfully. The opening of the film with its main title full of foreboding is followed by "Moxie Belated into the Cellar", a brilliantly evocative suspense piece, but what makes the score so memorable and imaginative is the changes in tempo and style such as the frantic synthesized "Fast Ride (Rome)" and later the magnificent and classic "Water Tenebrarius" with its choral vocals, a truly spell-binding piece of musical composition. This track is also used over

soundtracks (excluding "Inferno"), the most structurally accomplished with far more depth than the even earlier "Deep Red" or even, in some ways, "Suspense". The dynamic track, "Lisbo", which is as good as anything Goblin ever produced, is both commercially appealing and atmospheric. Sadly, in many ways, this score marked the end of an era for Argento, as since then he has used his music, although still to great effect, in a far more fragmented way, employing different composers, as well as pop songs and it would be nice to see him make a return to the full scoring style so outstandingly used on his previous movies. With "Phenomena" (aka Creepers) (1985), Argento decided upon using a variety of musical scores. From Malcom's track "Flesh of the Blade" would seem appropriate and works well within the film, and there is also a rendering of Rosenblatt's "Locomotive", but there is some dissatisfaction with the score, not in what was written but what was finally used. Claudio Simonetti and Fabio Pigazzelli, using the name Goblin once more in collaboration and respectively, composed some of their finest work to date, but sadly a great part of it never found its way into the film. Pigazzelli's track "Jennifer" is barely heard in the UK release and even in the original Italian version, the piece is not presented in its entirety but, worse than this, the greatest loss of all is the complete omission of the Simonetti/Pigazzelli track, "Jennifer's Friend". We can only guess as to where this music was originally intended to fit in, but its loss is indeed a great one as it is quite exceptional. Still, even with the work which was written, there are some outstanding contributions on the film's soundtrack, particularly Bill Wyman and Terry Taylor's "Valley", which opens the movie. This is a subtle piece which builds up dramatically to a charged finale, full of suspense and intense emotion. There was also originally several tracks composed by Simon Roswell, who has since gone on to score a number of Italian horror movies, including "Demos 12" and "StageFright". These performed with his band, And Sex Gang, fail to appear in either version of the film, but his song "The Maggots", a brief piece, warns its way into our ears! Of the contributions by Goblin which do make it onto the screen, the powerful "Sleep Walking" works best, and creating one of the most memorable fusions of visuals and music to have been devised by Argento in the scene where Jennifer first rises to go on her Scream/Dolls dark adventure. Also, Simonetti's theme, "Phenomena" is a fine offering and overall, although it could so

easily have been so much more, the music for the film is another success in a long line of Argento musical highlights.

The formula used for "Phenomena" was also carried over for the Argento produced "Bacon" (1987), although the songs by, among others, Billy Idol, Saxon, Go West and Motley Crue, are only heard, in the UK, briefly on radio. In fact, some of those chosen would have worked very well, if used properly in the film, especially Goblin's "White Wedding", Rick Springfield's "Walking on the Edge" and The Adventurers' "Send my Heart". The actual music for "Bacon's" is composed by the now familiar Claudio Simonetti, who would appear to be the only ex-Goblin to be working regularly. This is a pity as the talented Fabio Pigazzelli seems to rarely have the opportunity to work on film scores now and would be a welcome addition to the composers already established.

Simonetti's main theme "Bacon", is a good rhythmical piece, but for the most part the track "Killing" carries the film along to pretty good effect. The music heard is not particularly varied, with again some work written remaining unused, but it is still very effective. Even so, it would still be nice to see Argento returning to complete scores rather than falling into the fashionable trap of including all songs as an attempt to sell both the film and its subsequent soundtrack.

In saying all of this, Argento's latest film "Opera" has had an album released exclusively of operatic music, ignoring other work used on the movie, including that of Claudio Simonetti. This is very unfortunate and a lamentable decision by those concerned. How the soundtrack music will work in the finished film remains to be seen and heard, but whatever its merits or failings it will be without doubt another bold step in the exciting and distinctive musical world of Sergio Argento.





# THE RISE & FALL OF LAMBERTO BAVA

by Gordon Fiskelson

Renzo Bava, one of the most fondly remembered of Italy's horror film directors, became a father on 2nd April, 1944, when his son, Lamberto, was born. The child was set to follow in his father's footsteps as a director of fantasy/horror and adventure movies, but lately he has begun to stumble. The great hope that Bava Jr's films would live up to the quality of the best of Mario Bava's is steadily fading.

Lamberto Bava worked for his father for the first time as assistant director on the 1965 film, *PLANET OF THE VAMPIRES*, and from then until 1977 the son would assist the father on all his films. The last film that Mario Bava directed was the 1976 television movie, *WOMES OF THE ISLE*. Lamberto was promoted to co-director on this film; unfortunately the last time they would work together. *ROOTS OF FEAR*, a film project, was never made, and Bava Sr died 2 years later.

Whilst working for his father, Lamberto also made films with other directors, doing a variety of chores, including screenplay writing, assistant directing and script continuity. He was gradually building up his experience in the film industry in anticipation of his first solo directing efforts. This came in 1968 when he made *MACABRE*, an excellent exercise in psychological horror warned only by a "fantastic" and therefore out of place ending. Much had been learned from his father on films such as *BLOOD BRIDES* and *BLOOD SABBAT*, and this was put to good use in *MACABRE*. Stanko Molnar, an under-valued Italian actor (though used again by Bava in *BLACK IN THE DARK*) gives an excellent performance as does Denise Stagers fresh from Fellini's *CITY OF WOMEN* and soon to appear in *STRIP*. The atmosphere is slowly built up and leaves one gasping up until the ending, when all is revealed. He has not managed to recapture the quality of that first film

end, by all accounts of his latest work, is regressing rather than going forward. Bava had worked as first assistant director for Carlo Argento on *TENERAE* in 1962, and the same year he made an Argentesque movie called *A BLADE IN THE DARK*, which has only been seen in a cut version in this country (which film has not). A "giallo", like the Argento film, it concerns a film composer writing music for a horror film based on a character who is now killing visitors in the house (the Italian title is translated as *THE HOUSE WITH THE STAIRCASE IN THE DARK*). Another actor/assistant director appears in the film as the trampette murderer: Michele Scari, who has worked, as has Bava, with Carlo Argento.

Reverting to his late father's John Old pseudonym (but tagging on a Jr.), Lamberto made two films in 1969, *BLACKFINGER* and *DEVOURING WIVES*. The first is one of the director's favourites, made in the same locations as John Boorman's 1972 film, *DELIVERANCE*. George Eastman has very little to do in this one, but the story of hi-tech weapon "vs" good ol' backward boys was quite interesting and the film is not boring. *DEVOURING WIVES* stars a papier mache half-shark, half-octopus with cardboard teeth in a late 1960s rip-off. The once gorgeous Bagger Laxander shows how chubby she has become and the old-timers, William Berger and Claretta Garza, look ancient and tired. Bava's direction is routine to say the least.

Things took a turn for the better with the release of *SPARK* in 1969. Produced by Carlo Argento, the film was clichéd but exciting nonetheless, and may also have had more of Argento's influence than merely that of producer. Set almost entirely in a German cinema, the film (once it gets going) rarely lets up for an instant. The intrusion of a group of punks is as unwelcome as it is



unnecessary, but is clearly an attempt by Bava to cater for the younger fan who would be spending his money on the film and who could relate to the gang members. **BLOODS 2** the next year was more of the same in a different setting, with demons invading the land of the living through the television screen and infecting people with their blood. The special effects were reasonable, with Sergio Stivaletti doing his best to present something a little bit different. A dog becomes a demon as does a little boy who then "gives birth" to a small winged and toothed monster. **BLOODS 3** did rather well at the Italian box office in 1986 and led to a further sequel, this time directed by Michele Soavi. Bava was at one time named as director for the third film but it was not to be.

The same year, Bava made a television movie called **DOE OF MCDONALD**, which has not been released over here yet, though the Europeans can see it theatrically. In Germany it was released as **MCDONALD KILLER**, complete with earnest advertising artwork by the usually excellent Schlöss. This film returned Bava to the giallo, a genre he continued in with **DOE'S PARTNER** in 1987.

**LE FOIE DE SIDA** is given its original Italian title, starred Serena Grandi, a very well spoken Italian actress, who plays the proprietress of a magazine for men only called "Masculin". The story was specifically written with her in mind and concerns a killer (again) who is murdering these people who, in the past, had crossed him. Needless to say, this film is another of Lamberto's not to have a British release.

Also in 1987, he started a series of television movies, which provide a problem for the researchers: namely, which films are completed and which are still at the planning stage. Announced under the title of **BRITTOI GIALLI** (Yellow Shivers) were **PER SOFFOCLE, FINE ALLA MORTE** (released in the States as **UNTIL DEATH**, and due to be released here when problems with the video distributor occurred and the film disappeared); **LA CASA DELL'ORCA** (to be released in Britain as **BLOODS 3**, but there will no doubt be a copyright fuss over that title) - also known as **THE DARK**, **MENTE DI CANTIERE** (**BRANCHING OUT** on video) which is one of Bava's worst films to be seen here;

**I GIORNI DEL DIABLO** and **LA CASA DEL FANTASMA**. This series was originally to be released abroad as **TALES OF THE EGGYMAN** but the films are more likely to be shunted off straight to video. The quality of Bava's later films seem to be

consistently poor but the reasons for this are unclear; perhaps the few good films at the beginning of his solo career were flukes; perhaps money problems prompted Bava to churn out films, make money and preserve artistic sensibility.

His latest completed feature (although this article may already be out-of-date) is **BLOODS WITH A WARRIOR**, shown at last year's **MIFED** and, according to Italian sources, not worthwhile viewing. So where does he go from here? **BLOODS** has been announced several times, but even Lamberto feels it is too close to **GRIMES** to attempt. Whatever happens to him now, we can only hope that he regains some of his old form before the remaining loyal fans turn away for ever ... per sempre, fine alla sorte.







# SPACED OUT

(MARIO SERA'S  
PLANET OF THE VAMPIRES)

By Andrew Black

"Planet of the Vampires", Mario Sera's rare excursion into space, remains the pinnacle of achievement that all other Italian science fiction strives to emulate. In all honesty the spaghetti space films have seldom reached warp factor over-drive, no matter how much they may have aspired to. The volatile, artistic temperament that most typifies the Italians has lent itself more effectively to the emotional blend of Gothic horror and psychological terror best embodied in the films of Argento, and of Sera himself. Successful Italian space "epics" have been as slips on the horizon, so rarely sighted as to make Romy's comet appear as almost prolific! The early visual promise contained in Antonio Margheretti's films, such as "Battle of the Worlds" (1963), "The Wind, Wild Planet" and "War of the Planets" (Both 1965), has shown through like an icon in an otherwise

nebulous galaxy, epitomized in the more recent shooting stars (they should have been shot!) "Starcrash" (1979) and "Alien Contamination" (1980). The former is a jokey romp, noticeable only for the decorous Caroline Munro, the undecorous Joe Spinnell from "Mars" (1960) "Fame" and the reliable Christopher Plummer who must have needed the money! The latter is merely an excuse to up-date the vampiric "Moderato" (1952) into an "Alien" (1979) setting, utilizing the irresponsible Ian McCullough, star of many an Italian gut-cruncher from "Flesh & Eggs" (1978) to "Jungle Holocaust" (1980). Both films suffer under the (mis)guiding hand of Luigi Cozzi.

No such qualms invade the planet of Mario Sera's space vampires however. Instead, we are treated to a truly atmospheric picture that combines tension and visual



elegance in equal amounts, to deliver a film brimming with kaleidoscopic colour, acting as the perfect synthesis of science fiction and horror.

The film's premise, that the space ship Argos arrives into an isolated planet named Auro by a mysterious SOS call, borrows liberally from its take's "Hi! The Terror from Beyond Space", and was to later find itself as the inspiration for the much vaunted "Alien" (1979). Harry Sullivan plays Mark, the ship's captain and main reassuring voice, who responds to the SOS from the exploratory probe "Bellini". The juddery landing of the Argos on the planet Auro is rather unconvincing, along with the remainder of the film's "special effects" but it does give the film a kind of primitive charm, also exemplified by the space jargon that is prevalent; "synchronise the autovac reactor on the electro magnetic control device, apply neuro vascular tension, suppress cortical areas opt'l, is one example. Once the ship's outer door is lowered, however, we are instantly caught up in and mesmerised by the gradual assimilation of the planet's own distinctive landscape and characteristics. The rocky craters there are illuminated by the vibrant pastel shades and colours as all around banks of incandescent mist affixes from bubbling lava pools and asethrod the desolate landscape.

After a short but frenzied bout of madness that sweeps across the Argos crew like a deadly contagion, it comes as no surprise when the ship's reconnaissance party sight what will be the first of any "dead" bodies. Ray's oft quoted reliance on the seen here is never better served than here as, from a long shot, the camera rapidly zooms in on the contorted, bloodied face of one of the Bellini's crew. Then, in typical Bava style, the zoom-pulling camera erases itself over the other bodies that lie nearby, stream across the barren surface of the planet's waxy craters.

The swirling wind that punctuates the film's soundtrack proves later to be the perfect back-drop to complement the film's most stunning sequence. Bava's exemplary resurrection scene in "Black Sunday" (1960) is almost surpassed here as metal coffin lids quiver, bursting open as their occupants arise, tearing off the plastic shroud that so eerily arrests them.

The film then careers into a "cat and mouse" scenario between the Argos crew and

the un-dead members of the Bellini, the situation aptly summed up by the Argos captain: "If there are any intelligent creatures on this planet, they are our enemies". The idea that anyone could indeed be one of the alien "on-again" has more recently been demonstrated in "The Thing" (1982), and the scenes of the Argos crew discovering an ancient ship seem to have been the direct inspiration for "Alien" (1979). The ship's interior houses labyrinth passages, spiralling corridors and the skeletal remains of some other life form that, 'probably belonged to an ancient civilisation'.

The announcement, which reveals that the Bellini's crew have indeed been "taken over" by alien allies, gave the opportunity to induce some more shocks as one character opens his jacket to reveal a literally "rotten soul" beneath it, and another appears menacingly from behind a locker-cupboard door.

The alien inability to survive on their own is their reason d'être for occupying human bodies, also making a valid point as the human race's eternal cleaver for self-destruction. "You humans have fought and killed down through the centuries. Do you expect us to be any different?" The crew's brave words "we'll never submit to a breed of parasites" proves ultimately futile in the all too familiar "twick" ending as both the ship's captain and his fellow survivor Sanya (Norma Bengell) are exposed as aliens, now gloating over their most potential victims, a 'small planet' with a 'tiny civilisation' whose high rise apartment blocks unmistakably reveal it to be America.

Bava's rare excursion into science fiction proves to be ultimately successful, its compelling visuals and atmosphere allow scenes triumphing over a basic script and some primitive special effects. Considering its release date, three years before the arrival "2001 - A Space Odyssey" (1968), it is a thought-provoking forerunner into space, its sub-text of a highly intelligent alien form being subtly disseminated through the human race on earth is a sobering one, almost paying as a pre-quel to "Invasion of the Body snatchers" (1956), showing how the aliens first reached earth.

In "Planet of the Vampires", to use the captain's words, we do indeed have 'something tangible' whose quality 'doesn't disappear when (we) look straight at it'. It is not something that we can say today about many of the dire films that proliferate the genre and who are so constantly out-shone by Bava's own unique cinematic qualities.

# DEPRAVED & CORRUPT

By A Featherstone

It seems to me that the real problem with the BBFC is that it is so inconsistent and biased, with twenty examiners all with obviously different views and opinions. As an example, how can they justify the cuts in, say, EVILSPAWN and HOLLYWOOD (CHICKEN) NOODLES, when BRAIN SARGE was passed with less than a twenty second cut (did you see what the MPAA did to it?) and what about BAN OF THE DEAD?

The VIDEO RECORDINGS ACT (1984) which came into full operation on 1st September, 1984 was brought about to calm down and protect the so-called general public. This minority of people had already been stirred up, so hypocritically by the press in the early 'eighties.

The press ran false and damaging articles on many horror films, the most popular being the ones with the most shocking

names, like I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE or KILLER KILLER. Even JAMES FERRAN, director of the BBFC will admit that there is no such thing as a "VIDEO NASTY", a term coined for full impact by the press.

Some of the BBFC views contained in their Annual Report for 1987 disturbed me far more than any horror film could have done. The Report states "there has never been any evidence that video viewing contributed to what happened in Hungerford although the media, we think, irresponsibly, claimed the reverse, which is fine, but then they go on to say 'but it is our duty to come down on the side of caution'. The Board's policy is not only to exercise scenes of violence but the use of guns and knives.

The Board seems to contradict its own guidelines, given below are a few



paragraphs taken from Sections 18, 20 and 21 of their report for 1987.

Although the "VIDEO RASTY" is no longer to be found, events such as Hungerford and the possibility that some killers might have an obsession for violent videos (even though no causal connection has been proved) serve as grim warnings that particular vigilance is required.

#### Quoties

Other facts are also relevant. The way in which aggression is presented, the context in which it is displayed, and the attitude the viewer is encouraged to adopt towards it are all factors to be considered in evaluating the legitimacy of media violence. Also important is the type of film within which the action takes place, with an urban gang or vigilante movie more worrying than a Western or war film in which the setting distances the viewer from events on screen.

Many instances of violence can be dealt with through the category system, but during 1987, 28 cuts were made in 24 different videos irrespective of category to remove dangerously initiative blows of a kind which the Board's medical advisers have issued as may do serious harm if copied in real life. And in the "18" category, 140 separate cuts were made in 55 different videos to remove a total of 444 minutes of action or of the process of inflicting violence that had not been, or in some cases could not be, justified by narrative, context, genre or any other mitigating factor, even for an adult audience. Several films were rejected altogether on these grounds, including one in which a central section reflected too closely the tragedy of Hungerford.

Intervention is always an option with depictions that explicit violence for its own sake whilst greater consideration is allowed to works in which violence is a justifiable, essential and inextricable part of the structure of the film. Many narratives deal responsibly and intelligently with the very issue of violence, a recent notable example being the Oscar-winning PLATOON. This story of the Vietnam war contained more moments of serious violence and threat than would normally be permitted in the "18" category, but test screenings were arranged for teachers and then for an audience of 15/16 year-olds from six London schools, all of whom saw it as a serious anti-war film with some important lessons about the price of violence as well as valuable insights into human behaviour in circumstances of extreme pressures. Though very widely seen on film

and video, it has attracted few complaints on grounds of excessive violence in this category.

#### UNEQUITE

The Board adopts the attitude to so called respectable and intelligent films such as PLATOON (and given a 15 when contents deserved an 18) and cuts and bans films which do not, in the eyes of the Board, justify the violence (what's wrong with exploitation?)

But the violence contained in an ARGENT movie is very much so a justifiable and essential part of the film which, in a way, confronts the viewer with the reality of their own fears and brings them nearer to understanding and coping with violence/death in a realistic situation and, at the end the viewer is still aware that what he or she has seen is acting, special effects, etc., but if, on the other hand, the viewer is confused with reality and the fictional violence on display, then it is very unlikely that he will be able to tell the difference between violence in an exploitation film and one that deals responsibly and intelligently with violence.

As most of us know, the TEXAS CHAINSAW MASACRE PART 2 was refused a film classification, there were also sixteen video works refused a classification in '87 - these were: ABEL OF VERBORGEN (20m 43s), CRUCIBLE - THE WITOLD STORY (90m 22s), CLASS OF 1984 (90m 25s), THE ENIG PRODIGE aka BROTHER MAYER NIGHTMARE HATER (90m 08s), GAME OF SURVIVAL (82m 34s), POWERED ROLLER 2 aka ISLAND OF DEATH, DRAWING FOR LUST AND DEATH IN HYOCOS (78m 43s), SILENT NIGHT DEADLY NIGHT PART 2 (88m 38s), SIXTH FORM AT ST. WHITFIELD (12m 44s), THE STORY OF A PART 2 (100m 5s), TARGET MASACRE (64m 4s), VIOLATORS (71m 55s), WAR VICTIMS (90m 49s), WARRIORS END (90m 09s), WOLF RIDERS (83m 58s).

(listed are full Video running times which run at one frame (25) faster per second than the cinema 24, being 4% faster per hour. (The American NTSC runs at cinema speed).



# 22 DAYS 22 NIGHTS

by JOHN MARTIN



The epic filmography of Joe D'Amato (or Aristide Massadest as he is known to his mum) is littered with bad fright films (eg. THE ANTHROPOPHAGOUS BEAST), bad fuck films (eg. THE PLEASURE SHOP ON 7TH AVE) and films that are both things at the same time (eg. BODIC EIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, his soft-core porn re-staging of ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS; and who, apart from those who understandably fell asleep, could possibly forget the sight of Steven Carter probing his dead girlfriends B-spot in BLUE HELLCAUST).

This generic cross-fertilization spawned a stable of porno/horror cross-over stars(?) such as George Eastman, Laura Gomer, Annie Belle and Al Cliver (all ex's). Since making the Roger Corman-like transition from peyotistic trash director to producer of rather more polished efforts, D'Amato has been responsible for one quality horror movie, Michele Soavi's knockout Feature debut SLUGFEST, and with 11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS parts 1 and 2, he proves that he can actually produce and direct half-decent (well, quarter-decent) soft-core erotica. This brace of films can be seen as an attempt to launch an RGP's equivalent of the shop-worn Danielle character, whom D'Amato has reincarnated in various guises and even teamed up with THE LAST CARIBBEANS (whatever they are) for one picture. The DIVER DAYS segs claim to be based on the autobiographical erotic writings of one Sarah Asproon (our letter-dog [Missus] Arse) but one suspects that this is yet another Massadest pseudonym, along with Michael McBride, Peter Hudson, David Mills, Steven Benson, Keith Mancuso et al.

The adventure begins on a New Orleans ferry (favourite haunt of Italian exploitation directors on location), where gamblers yuppies Michael (Joshua McCloud) is seduced by Sarah ("Jessica Moore" aka Luciana Bittarotti) who is (conveniently) wearing nothing underneath her flimsy's and... Though rather more boyish in appearance, Sarah bears a passing resemblance to Greta Scacchi and has a shadier propensity to whip her tits out in the case of Art. Needless to say, Michael can't resist her silicone-stuffed projectiles or her lardy ass, cut much tripping in the rigging, scotching on the

poor deck and grunting on the prow, after which Sarah floozies off without another word, leaving the dazed dis-ah! to wonder what hit him. He races off to tell his come boys what happened (fate was built like a brick shit-house" he observes, sensitively).



Sarah plans to use the incident as the closing section of her book "Sarah and her 900 men" but her editor, Laura Gomer, tells her that the Michael interlude needs, er, fleshing out, so she treks him down by means of his wallet, which she stole while he was parking her (seems like a nice girl) and, egged on by her editor to juicy excess, introduces him to the expected heavy petting in public places, advanced foray in restaurants, booking in boys, video sex, the thrills of interracial trollism, etc. She even ties him to a pillar, pours honey on his body and licks it off (no fun). How will Michael's





coincidence with the upward Sarah effect, his up-coming marriage to Helen (Mary Sellers), due to take place exactly 11 days from the day Michael met Sarah (thus the title of the film)? Well, who really gives a toss - [unfortunate choice of expression there - Ed]? No doubt, however, all the romanticism among the JUDO-AND BLUDGE LACE relationship will be delighted to learn that Michael finally winks out on Sarah and does the right thing by sweet, docile Helen.

D'Alema's disaff 84 WEEKS lives up to the title it was hyped with, to the effect that it delivers more steamy eroticism than the Adrian Lyne propheet then again, the same could be said for your average episode of THOSE TWO DICKS. In fact, if all of Sarah's affairs were as tame as the one detailed here, I suspect that most copies of her book are destined for the remaindered shelf. But there is a certain amount to be said in the film's favour, not least that we are spared the sight of George Cabbage's beer belly and flabby buttocks (Moore c/leaves up in the cellulite stakes). There is also some well out-of-work dialogue to be admired, eg:

Sarah: Touch me - I'm all wet  
Michael: Where are your pants?  
Sarah: I ate them

(There's no restraining these hot-blooded Italians, is there?) The most weirdly enjoyable bit is the surreal moment where the film turns into the end of STAGFIGHT (a film which D'Alema never gives a chance to cannibalise) before it is

revealed that Michael and his fiancée are watching Savini's movie at the cinema. "What a romantic movie" she observes. What a strange comment about STAGFIGHT, especially from Sellers, who starred in it (as the bitchy Lucille). Above all else, 11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS does benefit from a vestigial plot (a rare luxury in the world of Italian exploitation), even if it does exist only as a means of stringing the boring scenes together.

11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS 2 (shot under the title TOP MOON) dispenses with such niceties, merely letting drop the information that Sarah and her editor (Kramer again) have abandoned the literary world to become high class prostitutes. Times must be hard in the publishing business.

The film opens with Sarah stimulating sex with shop window mannequins, while a fat, twenty yearer takes snapshots, and follows her on a typical working day. Eventually, she meets Cliff Evans (James Satterfield) a crazy mixed up kid who can't decide whether he's gay or not. Out of the kindness of her heart, Sarah resolves to demonstrate to Cliff the superiority of the female orifice as an object of desire, going at her back with predictable gusto. Just when he seems to be on the verge of returning to his boyfriend, Cliff and Sarah get it together in a heart-warming affirmation of "normality" that will engage gay viewers everywhere (assuming that any gays would be interested in watching this kind of thing in the first place). Considering that the film is composed almost entirely of copulation scenes, it is the height of hypocrisy when Moore is given the line "sex isn't everything", to mouth.

11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS 2 isn't quite as good as the original film (how often have you heard that before?) and both of them, while agreeable enough, are inferior to eg. Lucie Fauré's THE DEVIL'S HOME, which features mutual masturbation atop a speeding motorbike and Bianca Marsiliach dripping hot candle wax onto the tethered Ernst Haapas, who responds by declaiming depraved verse about "The Devil's Homopol". Incongruous analysts should also look out for the up-coming NOTHING UNDERNEATH PART 2, starring the gorgeous Florence Guerin. Those with a particular admiration for Jessica Moore/Luciana Ottaviani should send out for fresh Cabbages now - 11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS PART 3 has just been announced!

Due to the demise of ARATAN, 11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS is available for about a tanner in many shops.

The sequel is out on former ARATAN business Mel Dorevici's COLOURAGE label

# REVIEWS

## MACABE

By Gordon Flinagau

This was Lamberto Bava's first film as sole director after 15 years working with his father and other film makers as assistant director, screenwriter or, as in the case of *CARIBU*, being responsible for "script continuity". The 1978 TV film, *LA VERGINE SPILLE* was co-directed with his famous father, Mario Bava, but it was not until *MACABE* (to give it its original title) in 1980 that he finally came into his own, at the same time producing what is perhaps his best work to date.

The story professes to be based on a real-life case in which, to quote the film, "No reasonable explanation for Robert Bava's death could be found during the autopsy performed at the St. Charles Hospital in New Orleans and the case was filed under 'Unsolved crime'". Highly suspect! Like the Italian carnival "documentary" films, this sounds like the work of the studio ad-men.

Jane, separated from her husband, is having it easy with a lover while, at home, her nasty daughter is drowning her son in the bath. Returning hurriedly by car after a 'phone call from the vicious child, they are involved in a crash in which the lover is decapitated.

One year later, after being released from a mental hospital where she had been incarcerated after the loss of son and boyfriend, she returns to the room she had been in a year before with her lover, her landlord, Robert. Is blind but independent and is glad to see her back once more. He quickly becomes infatuated with Jane and so is quite naturally played when he hears what sounds like love-making from her room. There is also the strange nocturnal visit to the fridge on several occasions.

Robert determines to find out more about this mysterious lover and so he visits Jane's apartment where he is attacked by a now completely mad woman who he manages to kill after a struggle. Still curious about the bed, he leans forward to feel it and the decayed head of Jane's lover bites him in the throat.

Berlinda Stegers as Jane gives an excellent performance, as she had done in the same year's *LA CITTA DELLE DONNE* by Fellini, a completely different bottle of fish. She

is probably known best by genre fans for the British film *STRO*.

Stanko Molnar plays the blind Robert very well, too. A most under-rated actor, he was also used by Bava in his next film as director, *LA CASA CON LA SCALA DEL BUCO* where he came to a shatteringly nasty end.

Child Horror of the Year Award must go to Veronica Zeno, who plays Jane's daughter, Lisa.

It is a pity that Lamberto Bava is making below-average films nowadays; his early promise as a successor to his father has just not been kept. *MACABE* is a must for all horror fans and can be recommended as such, unlike *SOVETARDO DISTURBANCE*, which is a great (if not totally unexpected) disappointment.

## SAMPIN IN VERICE

By Andrew Featherstone

Vestron Video presents a Sonus Film Production with the participation of Reteitalia SPA

Written and Directed by Augusto Caminito  
Director of Photography - Antonio Manti  
Original Music by Luigi De Caro!!!

Lead Players - Klaus Kinski, Barber de Bock, Donald Pleasence, Christopher Plumber

In 1921 FRIEDRICH WILHELM MURRAY directed *HOFFENRU* - Cine symphonie des grauens (*HOFFENRU* - a symphony of horror) which is by far the most chillingly lyrical version to-date and in 1976 another German, WERNER HERZOG, virtually re-made *MURRAY*'s film, at times, almost frame by frame. Although *HERZOG*'s own trademark was embedded into the production, it was still a leap backwards for the Hausfrau story.

Now we have an even bigger leap backwards for poor old *Hausfrau*. That is AUGUSTO CAMINITO's unofficial continuation of the story. The film tries so hard to copy what even *HERZOG* for the most part failed to do and CAMINITO's poster-like camera merely records the dully lit streets of VERICE. KINSKI, once more in the title role, is good as always but with the material available the evening borders on the hysterical, in much the same faults of *HERZOG*!. It seems the SMP also had a hand in disjoining the more pervasively

series' scenes. As with most Italian products there is no real story, merely tracing the events as KINGSLI returns to VENICE on his quest for more blood, there is not much to stop him. CHRISTOPHER YOUNGER is looking decidedly old and DONALD PLAGIANCE merely eats, drinks and looks fairly bemused at the proceedings. (even LINDO GECARILLI's music was based on someone else's work (that of NARGELLIS's "MAGIC"). VARIOUS ON VENICE does have its moments but they are few and far between. As KINGSLI says "Time has no meaning when you live forever" but for us mere mortals we should be spending what little time we have watching something a lot better.

I will approach CROKITO's next effort with more caution.

### GRANTING DISTURBANCE

By Gordon Fingleton

This film is not likely to disturb the sleep of the dead, in fact it may well put more mortals to sleep. Lamberto Bava's latest release in Britain is once more a poor effort, showing none of the promise of his first few features.

The story concerns some youngsters who, after a bout of shoplifting, find themselves in a strange, crumbling church. Investigating, they find a weird tavern inhabited by odd weirdo people and a deformed inn keeper (played by Bava regular, Lino Salame) who dares the teenagers to spend the night in an underground crypt. If they manage to do this, they will be given the money and treasure, apparently donated by previous visitors.

David goes in himself, but is followed later by the remainder of his friends. They are chased by a rotting zombie, escape from it, and Robbie falls into a pit full of putrefying corpses (reminiscent of a few films, not least *PHOBIA*). *DISTURBANCE* uses ideas from a lot of genre films but does not supply many of its own. Perhaps, if the comedy had been omitted, the film would have been a lot better. As it stands though, the humour is poor and misplaced. (The scene where the feasting ghosts are frightened by our heroes is quite funny, though).

The group are continually split up and reform, and after a while this becomes monotonous. They even manage to get some sleep. Unable to escape, they go around

in circles, still giggling and feeling about. Finally, Mickey (who is psychic) leads them back to the inn where the inn keeper is waiting. He rips off his mask to reveal a rotting face, complete with glowing (why glowing?) eyes and advances on the teenagers. It transpires that he is the Grim Reaper, and that he has come to claim them.

In the last scene, David stabs the creature and the group escapes to the outside world, only to be confronted by the police and the owner of the shop (a *Lamperto Bava* cameo) from which they had stolen. The treasure they had taken leads to them being charged with grave robbing, too.

The photography is good; at least there is always something nice (or not so nice) to look at. There are very few shocks, most are telegraphed way in advance, and the story is weak, to say the least. I spent the movie looking for familiar faces and found a few, but surely *GREGORY LECHE TARDIEUX* is a pseudonym. Once a promising director, Bava Jr, seems to be merely another hack. A pity!



# A BLADE IN THE DARK



A NEW DIMENSION  
OF THE DARK

A NATIONAL CINEMA PRESENTATION  
A BLADE IN THE DARK

ANDREA CICCIPONTI - LARA MARI

Directed by LAMBERTO BAVA Produced by BOWLING GREEN